

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A communications and data transfer system for gaming establishments having a plurality of gaming machines arranged in proximity to each other, said system comprising a hand held portable transponder adapted to transmit and receive modulated electromagnetic radiation over a limited range which approximates to only the linear distance occupied by said gaming machines, said transponder further comprising a display device and an input mechanism, and each of said gaming machines includes a communication module connected to a master gaming controller of each said gaming machine whereby identification and control signals for a specific one or ones of said plurality of adjacent gaming machines can be input to, and sent from, said transponder to the master gaming controller of the selected gaming machines and in reply thereto, status data of said selected gaming machines can be sent to, or overwritten by, said transponder and wherein the master gaming controller controls the games played on said gaming machine.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein said transponder comprises a personal digital assistant.
3. The system of claim 1 wherein said transponder can download information to, and upload information from, a plurality of said gaming machines all located within said distance.
4. The system of claim 3 wherein the transponder displays a list or a graphical representation said list of the plurality of said gaming machine all located within said distance that are in communication with said transponder.
5. The system of claim 1 wherein each said gaming machine has stored therein a multiple number of game programs and said control signals select a predetermined one of said programs to determine which game is able to be played on said machines.
6. The system of claim 4 wherein the selection of said game program occurs at a predetermined time and after transmission of said control signals.

7. The system of claim 1 where each said gaming machine is operable to receive a download of a game program and said control signals are for selecting and for triggering the download of a selected game program to one or more of the gaming machines.
8. The system of claim 1 wherein said status data includes data selected from the group consisting of cash tin status, hopper status, printer paper status, button malfunction status, lamp status, note reject data, coin reject data and cash turnover ratio.
9. The system of claim 1 wherein said control signals input configuration data into the or each selected said gaming machine, said configuration data being selected from the group consisting of game type, percentage return, button panel layout, GMID number, and home number.
10. The system of claim 1 wherein said status data includes performance data for one or more selected gaming machines.
11. The system of claim 9 wherein the performance data is for games played by a particular player on the one or more selected gaming machines.
12. The system of claim 9 wherein the performance data is an outcome of a particular game played on the one or more selected gaming machines.
13. The system of claim 1 wherein the communication module is coupled to a wireless interface.
14. The system of claim 12, wherein the wireless interface is located on a player tracking unit coupled to the gaming machine.
15. The system of claim 1, wherein transponder is operable to display a map of a casino layout on the display.
16. The system of claim 14, wherein the transponder is operable to display a location of the transponder on the casino layout.
17. The system of claim 1, wherein the transponder is operable to provide directions to a particular gaming machine in the gaming machines.

18. The system of claim 1, wherein the transponder is operable to provide a prediction of a performance on the gaming machine of a game selected to replace a current game on the gaming machine.
19. The system of claim 1, wherein each gaming machine is operable to generate a game of chance, receive cash or indicia of credit for wagers on the game of chance, to present the outcome of the game of chance and output cash or indicia of credit.
20. A method of outputting or changing status data of a selected one or ones of a plurality of electronic gaming machines each having a master gaming controller with an electromagnetic communication module connected thereto, said plurality of gaming machines being arranged in proximity to each other in a gaming establishment, said method comprising the steps of:
  - (i) bringing within range of said selected gaming machine a hand held portable transponder adapted to transmit and receive modulated electromagnetic radiation over a limited range which approximates to only the linear distance occupied by said gaming machines,
  - (ii) transmitting identification and control signals from said transponder to said selected gaming machine(s) to both select same and enable the master gaming controller thereof, and
  - (iii) receiving from said selected gaming machine(s) at said transponder, status data of said selected gaming machine, and/or
  - (iv) transmitting from said transponder to said selected gaming machine(s) status data which is over-written into the master gaming controller of said selected gaming machine(s).
21. The method of claim 19, wherein the status data is for specifying one or more game programs available for play of selected gaming machine(s).
22. The method of claim 19, further comprising: transmitting from said transponder control signals to the gaming machine to trigger a download of a selected game to said gaming machine(s).

23. The method of claim 19 further comprising: transmitting from said transponder control signals to the gaming machine to input configuration data into the or each selected said gaming machine, said configuration data being selected from the group consisting of game type, percentage return, button panel layout, GMID number, and home number.
24. A method of selecting a game for a gaming machine on a hand-held computing device, the method comprising:
- displaying a list or a graphical representation of one or more gaming machine in communication with the hand-held computing device;
  - receiving a selection of one of the gaming machines via an input device on the hand-held computing device;
  - displaying performance data for the selected gaming machine on a display screen of the hand-held computing device;
  - receiving a selection a new game for the selected gaming machine via the input device on the hand-held computing device;
  - displaying a predicted performance of the new game on the selected gaming machine on the display screen of the hand-held computing device; and
  - transmitting from hand-held computing device to said selected gaming machine status data which is over-written into a master gaming controller of said selected gaming machine wherein the status data is for allowing the new game to be made available for play on the gaming machine.
25. The method of claim 24, wherein only one game is available for play on the gaming machine at any one time.
26. The method of claim 24, wherein the status data triggers a download of the new game from a remote device to the selected gaming machine.